

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد
بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مېباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم
از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

Vijay Prashad

09.11.2021

Will people with weapons allow our planet to breathe?

Perhaps it is fitting that US President Joe Biden arrived in Glasgow for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) with eighty-five cars in tow, months after [declaring](#) "I am a car man" (for more details on the climate catastrophe, see our [Red Alert: One Earth](#)). Only three countries in the world have [more](#) cars per person than the United States, and these countries (Finland, Andorra, and Italy) have a much smaller population than the U.S.

Just before Biden left for the G20 summit, his meeting with Pope Francis and COP26, caused his administration to [pressure](#) oil-producing states (OPEC+) to "do what is necessary in terms of supply," that is, to increase oil production. As the United States pressured OPEC+ to increase oil production, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released a key [report](#) on global emissions. UNEP noted that G20 countries are responsible for about 80% of global greenhouse gases and that the three largest carbon [emitters](#) per capita are Saudi Arabia, Australia and the United States. Given that the populations of Saudi Arabia (34 million) and Australia (26 million) are much smaller than that of the United States (330 million), it is evident that this country emits much larger volumes of CO2 than these other two: Australia accounts for 1.2% of global carbon emissions, while Saudi Arabia accounts for 1.8% and the United States 14.8%.



Francesco Clemente (Italy), *Sixteen Amulets for the Road (XII)*, 2012-2013.

Ahead of the Glasgow meeting, G20 leaders met in Rome to put their own approach to the climate catastrophe. The communiqué that emerged from this meeting, the ["G20 Leaders' Declaration in Rome,"](#) was lukewarm and used terms such as "move forward," "reinforce actions," and "increase." According to the Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), unless carbon emissions are reduced, the key goal of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming compared to pre-industrial levels is unlikely to be achieved. The IPCC notes that there is an 83% chance of reaching that target if carbon emissions are reduced to 300 gigatons from now until the time we achieve net-zero carbon emissions (there are currently 35 gigatons of annual CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels). However, the chances are reduced to 17% if we can only reduce emissions to 900 gigatons. The IPCC suggests that the faster the world progresses towards net-zero emissions, the more likely it is to avoid catastrophic levels of warming.

At the 2015 COP21 meeting in Paris, none of the powerful countries even wanted to utter the phrase "net zero emissions." Now, thanks to the work of IPCC reports and massive campaigns around the world on the climate emergency, leaders who would prefer to be "car men" are forced to utter that expression. Although the need to reach zero carbon emissions by 2050 has been on the table for some years, the G20 statement ignored it and opted for the vague formulation that net emissions must end "by or around the middle of

the century." Nor was there any talk of global emissions of methane, which is the second most abundant anthropogenic greenhouse gas after CO₂.



Iwan Suastika (Indonesia), *The Beauty and the Fragile Ones (Planet Earth)*, 2020.

In the days leading up to the COP26 meeting, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet [said](#): "The time has come to leave behind empty speeches, broken promises and broken commitments. We need laws to be passed, programs implemented, and investments to be funded quickly and adequately, without further delay." However, there has been a delay since the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. Returning to the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm (1972), the countries of the world [committed themselves](#) to doing two things: reversing environmental degradation and recognizing the "common but differentiated responsibilities" of developed and developing countries. It is clear that developed countries – mainly Western countries, former colonial powers – have consumed far more than their "carbon budget" is due, while developing countries have not contributed as much to the climate catastrophe and struggle to meet basic obligations to their populations.

The Rio formula – common and differentiated responsibilities – is present in the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the Paris Agreements (2015). Promises were made, but they were not kept. Developed countries promised what came to be called "climate finance," both to

mitigate the disastrous outcomes of the climate catastrophe and to shift dependence on coal-based energy for other forms of energy. The [Green Climate Fund](#) has fallen far short of the \$100 billion annual commitment pledged in 2009. The G20 meeting in Rome did not reach any consensus on the lack of contributions to this Fund; Meanwhile, it is important to recognize the stark contrast that, during the pandemic, a total of \$16 trillion in fiscal stimulus [was disbursed](#) between March 2020 and March 2021, mainly in developed countries. Given the improbability of a serious debate on climate finance, COP26 is likely to be a failure.



He Neng (China), *Waterfront*, 1986.

Tragically, the COP26 process has been embroiled in the web of dangerous geopolitical tensions, driven largely by the United States in its [eagerness](#) to impede China's scientific and technological advancement. Coal is at the center of the debate, arguing that unless China and India reduce their coal-fired power plants, it will not be possible to reduce carbon emissions. In September, China's President Xi Jinping [declared](#) at the United Nations that "China will strive to reach the peak of carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060"; he also claimed that China "will not build new coal plants overseas." This was a monumental declaration, far ahead of any of the commitments made by the other great world powers. Rather than relying on this commitment, the Western-driven debate has largely consisted of smearing developing countries, including China, and blaming them for the climate catastrophe.

Analyzing the IPCC evidence, economist John Ross recently [demonstrated](#) that, according to the United States' own proposal to reduce current emissions by 50-52% compared to 2005 levels, the level of THE COUNTRY's per capita CO2 emissions would still represent 220% of the global average in 2030. If the U.S. were to reach its target, the country's per capita carbon emissions in 2030 would be 42% higher than China's current ones. The US has suggested that it would like to see a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030; since it would take as a reference the current unequal levels of emissions, it would be allowed to emit 8.0 tons of CO2, China would correspond to 3.7 tons, Brazil 1.2 tons, India 1.0 tons and the Democratic Republic of the Congo 0.02 tons. As Ross shows, China's per capita CO2 emissions are only 46% of those of the US, while other developing countries emit much less (Indonesia, 15%; Brazil, 14%, India, 12%). For more details, follow the [Climate Equity Monitor](#) developed by the [MS Swaminathan Research Foundation](#) and the National Institute of Advanced [Studies](#) (Bengaluru, India).

Instead of focusing on the necessary energy transition, developed countries have resorted to crude propaganda against a handful of developing states such as China and India. The Energy Transition Commission's *Making Mission Possible: Delivering a Net-Zero Economy* [estimates](#) that the cost of a transition will be 0.5% of global GDP by 2050, a negligible amount compared to catastrophic alternatives, such as the disappearance of several small island nations and the rise of extremely erratic weather patterns.

The cost of the transition has decreased due to the decrease in the price of key technologies (onshore wind farms, photovoltaic solar cells, batteries, etc.). However, it is important to recognize that these values remain artificially low due to the very low wages paid to miners of the key minerals and metals that feed these technologies (such as cobalt miners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and the measly royalty payments charged by the countries of the South for these raw materials. If the real costs were paid, the transition would be more expensive, and the countries of the South would have the resources to pay for the change without relying on the climate fund.



Victor Ehikhamenor (Nigeria), *Child of the Sky VII*, 2015.

The Tricontinental Institute for Social Research will be in Glasgow together with delegates from the [International People's Assembly](#). We will be at various events to probe the spirit of popular movements. At the conference, Nnimmo Bassey of the [Health of Mother Earth Foundation](#) (Benin City, Nigeria) and I discussed the catastrophe. Bassey wrote a powerful [poem](#), "Volver a ser," of which we present an excerpt here:

Who should gobble up the carbon budget,
envelop Mother Earth in endless clusters of smog?
Who has to accumulate climate debt?
And who has to be a carbon slave?
Colonizing the
biosphere Annihilate the
ethnosphere Hopes traced in colonial
geographies of death Marked by sport, with traps and floating in blood.

...

The dream has vanished, the rooster has
crowed, The Traitor seeks a
branch to mimic the movement
of the pendulum And one or two shed a tear for
the press As the hawk glides gently over

the winds of the funeral song looking for hapless prey The funeral drums burst through the
pulsating biceps of pain The flutes whisper a long-forgotten funeral song that suddenly
emerges from the depths of years of history.

As the daughters and sons of the earth collect pieces of hills,
rivers and sacred forests Mother Earth awakens, embraces her visible and invisible
children

And finally humans become again.

Cordially

Vijay



Chris Jordan (USA), *Crushed Cars #2 Tacoma*, 2004.

Vijay Prashad

Original: [Will the People with Guns Allow Our Planet to Breathe: The Forty-Fourth Newsletter \(2021\)](#)

Available translations: Português_Deutsche_Italiano

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

Source: [Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, Bulletin 44 \(2021\)](#), November 4, 2021

More on this topic

Red alert

[Red Alert: One Earth](#)

june 2, 2021

Dossier

[The world oscillates between crises and protests](#)

january 7, 2020

Red alert

[Fires in the Brazilian Amazon](#)

october 4, 2019